

OVERVIEW

■ EZA seminar of experts on the European social policy

Money, ethics and the future of Europe were the main themes of the seminar, held in Leuven, Belgium, on 29 March 2012. *Page 2*

■ Master's degree course "Social Dialogue, participatory democracy and civil economy"

The online course is being run by the San Antonio Catholic University of Murcia (UCAM) in English and Spanish, and begins on 1 September 2012. *Page 2*

■ EZA's focal issue of 2012: Combating poverty and social exclusion as part of the Europe 2020 Strategy



A decent minimum wage helps combat poverty and social exclusion: that is one of the core statements of the EZA and HIVA study which is concurrent with the series of EZA projects on this issue. *Page 3*

■ 40 years of the MCL (Movimento Cristiano Lavoratori)

The encounter with Pope Benedict XVI on 19 May 2012 was one of the highlights of the 40th anniversary of the MCL. *Page 3*

EDITORIAL



Dear Friends,

"The world's eyes are on us", said a member of the Board of the recently founded Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen Society in early June 2012, at the birthplace of the social reformer and founder of the co-operative movement in the immediate vicinity of Königs-winter. Today the movement has hundreds of millions of members the world over. In their own very different ways they all want to adapt Raiffeisen's spiritual legacy to contemporary structural change and globalisation. We cannot help asking why the world now has its eyes more than ever before

on organisations operating as co-operatives. They used to be set up in times of great poverty and famine. And today? It is not only the latest OECD report that confirms a rise in poverty, especially old-age poverty. It is still not possible to quantify the extent of the financial market and national debt crisis, which is why it is not possible to come up with solutions yet.

In such uncertain times people take stock and the initiative. Co-operatives satisfy people's economic needs better on a social and ethical basis, and give them access to the market and capital. It is there that they can live and experience man's most innate principles of self-help, self-management and responsibility with all rights and duties. That is what the entire system is based on – an out-and-out Christian-social approach to life.

I am delighted that this issue is becoming increasingly important in our seminars.

*Yours,
Roswitha Gottbehüt
Secretary-General*

Quality, not quantity in the employment policy

As workers' organisations see it, that must be the main feature of sustainably effective strategies for creating jobs. This is the conclusion reached by the "Europe 2020 – How can the 75% employment target be properly achieved?" study, recently published in conjunction with the Research Institute for Labour and Society (HIVA) of the Catholic University of Leuven/Belgium. The study primarily tackles the issue of the Europe 2020 Strategy's employment target and is available in German, English and French (www.eza.org).

The study compares previous EU strategies and takes a critical view of the EU Commission's political approaches. The study says "cutting labour costs is no guarantee of more attractive work."

It also substantiates that job security, secure working conditions, fair pay and access to welfare benefits result in greater productivity and foster growth. Moreover, many social security mechanisms would stabilise effectively phases of economic upturn.

The study analyses indicator systems that measure "good work", rates their strengths and weaknesses, and mirrors the current state of research.

It also makes recommendations for workers' organisations and presents successful examples of how good-quality jobs are created and maintained with the help of the social dialogue. Statistics in clear graphics enable the quality of work to be compared in numerous ways. ■

Money, ethics and the future of Europe

EZA seminar of experts on the European social policy in relation to the financial crisis

The aim of the seminar, held at the premises of EZA member HIVA in Leuven, Belgium, on 29 March 2012, was to come up with joint answers to crisis-related ethical, financial and economic questions with the aid of a committee of experts. A retrospective of the EZA Financial Crisis project 2009/2010 and the recommendations drawn up at the time emphasised how they are still highly topical and relevant.

Jozef Pacolet, head of the HIVA Welfare State and Housing research group, spoke on the development of the social security systems and the welfare state in Europe. He underlined the necessity of raising the pensionable age, the pan-European introduction of minimum wages, the implementation of a fairer tax system, and a general reduction in working hours in order to moderate growth and to achieve a higher employment rate.

Luk Bouckaert, President of the European Spirituality in Economics and Society

Forum, shed light on the future role of trade unions, which will have to attach greater importance to the interests of society as a whole in their work in order to be able to counteract increasing individualisation and the loss of trust people have in systemic institutions.

Marcus Klug, member of the Board of the Republic of Austria's Federal Pension Fund, explained that the injections of liquidity from the European Central Bank (ECB) were unable to provide sustainable solutions to the growth problem or the problem of lacking loans to companies and individuals; instead they merely improved the banks' refinancing problem. Luc van Liedekerke, Professor at the Centre for Economics and Ethics at the Catholic University of Leuven, stressed the necessity of reregulating the financial markets. He emphasised that the role of the EZB was very important, since it was the only player that had the opportunity to calm the markets down.

The seminar established that workers currently face the erosion of minimum loans, increasing flexibilisation, forced individualisation, and fear of investing on the part of companies. That is why the experts' conclusion was that workers' organisations had to call for a lesser tax burden to be borne by medium and low incomes, self-employed workers to become better organised, and greater emphasis to be placed on the issue of the co-operative organisation approach.

Michael Schwarz ■

Capacity Building: EZA is opening new doors for its educational work

Master's Degree "Social Dialogue, Participative Democracy and Civil Economy"



Piergiorgio Sciacqua, Co-President of EZA, and José Luis Mendoza Pérez, President of the San Antonio Catholic University of Murcia, at the signing of the partnership agreement

As an important outcome of the EZA seminars for workers' organisations – in particular in coordination the EZA member centre CST in Spain – the subject of Social Dialogue was brought to the attention of the Catholic University San Antonio of Murcia (UCAM). Piergiorgio Sciacqua, Co-Presi-

dent of EZA, and José Luis Mendoza Pérez, President of UCAM, signed a partnership agreement which enables EZA members to participate in Master's Degree courses on Social Dialogue.

The Master's Degree in "Social Dialogue, Participate Democracy and Civil Economy" is an accredited official title and adapted to the European Higher Education Area in 27 EU member states. It supplements a basic study (Bachelor) and consists of 60 ECTS credits divided into compulsory subjects, a module of external practices and a final master thesis. The Master's Degree is being offered on an online format while

there will also be voluntary Masters Sessions conducted by internationally renowned speakers.

The subjects of the Master's Degree programme are divided into four areas of knowledge: the Christian roots of Social Dialogue and participation: regulation and current status of the Social Dialogue; regulation and development of citizenship participation; the present and future Civil Economy.

With great pleasure EZA says special thanks to Law Professor Dr. Alfredo Ramírez Nárdiz, UCAM, for implementing this interesting course.

The Master will start on 1st September 2012 and will last one year. The registration is still open until 1st November 2012. The languages will be English and Spanish. All documents will be offered in both languages.

For further information please contact Norbert Klein (klein@eza.org). ■

A decent minimum wage helps combat poverty and exclusion

The struggle against poverty and exclusion is one of the major tasks of workers' organisations in Europe. This was the conclusion reached by some 50 seminar-goers from ten countries who gathered in Warsaw/Poland on 20 and 21 April 2012 to discuss the Europe 2020 Strategy goal of reducing the number of people exposed to the risk of poverty by 20 million. That is why Piotr Duda, the President of the host Polish trade union Solidarność, called for the introduction of a pan-European minimum wage manifestly above the poverty line. As its contribution to implementing the Europe 2020 Strategy, Poland intends to bring 1.5 million people out of the risk

of poverty by 2020, Minister of Labour and Social Policy Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz said during the conference.

The seminar kicked off a series of EZA projects in the 2012/2013 year of education and training that address the issue of combating poverty and social exclusion as part of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Together with the Catholic University of Leuven's Research Institute for Labour and Society (HIVA), EZA has been accompanying these seminars concentrating on key issues. From the initial findings of the attendant EZA and HIVA study, what else is needed apart from a decent minimum wage is well-paid, stable employment. Anyone in such gainful employ-

ment has a much lower risk of being in poverty. Continual access to employment is becoming harder and harder for a growing number of workers on low wages. This also applies to a considerable extent to young people. And it is precisely here that social partners and policy-makers must take countermeasures.

Since then there have been other seminars in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Lithuania and Portugal. These seminars debated the impact of the ongoing debt and economic crisis on combating poverty as well as the challenges for the social partners and their allies in civil society. ■

Big Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the MCL



Pope Benedict XVI at the encounter with MCL members on 19 May 2012 – one of the highlights of the 40th anniversary of the MCL

This year sees the 40th anniversary of the foundation of EZA member MCL (Movimento Cristiano Lavoratori), which is why throughout Italy they are staging events to recall the great commitment and strong presence of the MCL in Italian society and the world over. After an introduction by MCL President Carlo Costalli, 10,000 MCL members met Pope Benedict XVI in Rome on 19 May 2012, on which occasion the Holy Father called on the MCL to work for greater social justice. He stressed that volunteer work and solidarity had to form the basis of true social justice. Volunteering could not, he said, be acquired in the market or decreed by law. But both the economy

and politics needed volunteer work and people capable of reciprocal giving.

Benedict XVI challenged the MCL to raise its profile in the world of work, and in doing so attend to young people and their problems. This challenge was addressed to all Christian workers. It was important to take responsibility and bring hope into the workers' world, which was experiencing a major crisis because of economic developments.

After the encounter with the Pope, the MCL will continue its celebrations with further meetings. Its aim is to express its trust and confidence in the co-operation between all the movements of Christian workers in Europe, many of which are

organised in EZA, in order to create a stronger Europe characterised by our values in society. Piergiorgio Sciacqua ■

IMPRINT

Published by

EZA

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Photos

EZA, UCAM, MCL

Frequency of publication

Four issues a year



This publication receives financial support from the European Union.